

Estrogen: what to expect

Estrogen will cause changes in your body. Some of these changes will be permanent, meaning they won't go away if you stop taking estrogen. Some of the changes will be temporary, meaning they will go away if you stop taking estrogen. Everyone's body is different. The changes you go through might be different than the changes of someone else taking estrogen.



Photo from Center of Excellence
for Transgender Health

Permanent changes:

- **Breasts:** Your breasts will develop. Breasts development is different for everyone.
- **Genitals:** Your testes will get smaller.
- **Pregnancy:** You will be less able to make sperm. It may be harder for you to get someone pregnant. Lower fertility is a permanent change for some people and a temporary change for other people. This means that you can't be sure if you will be able to get someone pregnant if you stop taking estrogen. If you think you might want to be a biological parent one day, talk to your doctor about sperm banking.

Common temporary changes:

- **Body:** Your fat might move from your belly to your thighs or butt. You might feel more hungry than usual, gain weight or feel bloated.
- **Skin:** You may have softer and less oily skin.
- **Hair:** Your hair might get softer and balding may slow down. If you have already gone bald, your hair will not grow back. Facial hair does not usually go away.
- **Sex:** You might not want to have sex as much. It might be harder for you to get an erection.
- **Emotional:** You might have emotional changes. Talk to your doctor if you are feeling depressed, anxious or are thinking about hurting yourself or others.
- **Medical:** Tell your doctor any medicines you are on before you start estrogen. Tell your doctor if you smoke cigarettes or drink alcohol as it may change the way hormones work in your body .

When will these changes happen?

Change	Will start in:	Biggest change in:
Lower sex drive	1-3 months	1-2 years
Fewer erections	1-3 months	3-6 months
Balding slows down	1-3 months	1-2 years
Body fat changes	3-6 months	2-5 years
Less muscle mass/strength*	3-6 months	1-2 years
Softer and less oily skin	3-6 months	not known
Breast growth	3-6 months	2-3 years
Smaller testes	3-6 months	2-3 years
Thinner body hair that grows slower**	6-12 months	> 3 years

* depends on how much you work out

** not all body hair will disappear

Other tips:

- Only take the hormones given to you by your doctor. Make sure to come to all of your follow up visits.
- Talk to your doctor about your goals on hormones or if you're not seeing the results you want. Do not take more hormones without talking to your doctor first.
- Estrogen is not birth control. You can still get someone pregnant while taking estrogen. If you have sex with someone who could get pregnant, talk to your doctor about your options for preventing pregnancy..
- It is not safe to reuse or share needles, but if you do, always be sure to rinse 3 times with water and bleach. Then soak in bleach for at least 30 seconds.